

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify in support of HB 3007. Having been a professional educator since 1999, I have had the great privilege of meeting and working with many excellent teachers. I have seen their commitment to providing the very best educational opportunities possible for our students.

Unfortunately, I have also seen the negative impacts that a lack of adequate health insurance has had on many of those educators, public colleges and universities and the students we serve. It is because of these impacts that I write to you in strong support of HB 3007 as an important first step.

Impact on Educators:

Like many educators, I began my career as a 'part timer'. I was introduced to the concept of a "Road Scholar"--an educator that drives up and down the I-5 corridor teaching part time at various schools. Many of my colleagues and I would work at multiple schools, sometimes driving from the Portland area to Eugene and back, teaching courses along the way to try to make ends meet. I recall one of my colleagues (and perhaps one of the best educators I have ever met as an educator or a student) would often teach between 8-10 classes just to provide for his family. Like many other educators, he would be forced to leave the profession or take his experience and leave Oregon in search of health insurance for him and his family.

It does not have to be this way. These educators are working part time at multiple locations, but combined it is full-time. This bill offers a good step to provide equitable health care to those working equally full time work.

Impacts on colleges:

To serve its purpose, a college must provide students with the courses needed to successfully complete their education. In order to meet this responsibility, colleges often need an instructor to teach a single section of a critical course that students need. When educators leave the profession or are less willing to teach part time for a school, it becomes harder for the colleges to find instructors to teach those critical courses. I have personally been contacted by multiple community colleges desperately trying to get coverage for COM 111 (public speaking). When a college is unable to find an instructor, the courses are simply cancelled. The student, being unable to get the course this term, is often told that they will just need to try to take it during a future term.

Impacts on students:

It is said that "time is money"--rarely is this more true than for a student attempting to complete their education. Their desire for highly qualified educators teaching small classes (to enhance the student's opportunity to engage with an expert in the field) that are available NOW can not be overemphasized. When students are not able to register for the class(es) they need to take now due to a lack of educators available, they become very frustrated. Sometimes the class they need is a prerequisite for another class they need next term that may only be offered once per year. This will now delay the completion of their education by an entire year. More time... more money... more frustration. Some of these students will just accept the delay. They will pay a cost in time and money, and the taxpayers will as well. Among other harms, this will lead to higher student loan debt and lost opportunity to enter the workforce as a fully educated participant earlier. Others make a more unfortunate choice--they drop out and leave without completing their education. While it would be wrong to conclude that their previous work has been wasted (they did get a partial education that can serve them better than no education at all), but it is far less of an advantage than completing their degree would have been.

Their potential is short changed. That impacts their future, and our state's future.

Let us fix these problems. Please support our educators, colleges and students. Please support HB 3007 as a very important first step.